

Changing Trends in Abortions

The major trend in abortions has been the decline in both the absolute number and rate of abortion for the past two decades in Missouri. Although 1996 shows a slight increase in both the number and rate of abortion it is likely that this represents only a slight fluctuation. The long term trend since 1980 has been one of decreasing abortions so that the 13,989 abortions occurring to residents of Missouri in 1996 is 35 percent less than the 1980 total of 21,671. Figure 1 illustrates the decline in abortion rates (number of abortions divided by female population 15-44 times 1000) from 1980 through 1996. The decline in Missouri's abortion rate is in contrast to the U.S. rate which remained relatively stable from 1981-1993 before decreasing to 21.02 in 1994. Missouri's abortion rate was approximately 40 percent less than the U. S. rate in 1994.

Another major change is in the increasing age of the clientele seeking abortions. Figure 2 reflects this change: in 1980 nearly one-third (32.3 percent) of those seeking abortions were under the age of 20; by 1996 females under the age of 20 only constituted one-fifth (20.0 percent) of those seeking abortions. Conversely, from 1980 to 1996 the proportion of abortion clientele over the age of 24 increased from 32.4 percent to nearly half (48.5). Contrary to popular opinion, teenagers have constituted a minority of those seeking abortions since 1980. The trend toward older abortion clientele reflects a combination of factors including the aging of the population, the requirement of parental consent for minors³, and greater acceptance of births to unmarried mothers⁴ lessening the demand for abortions among teens.

Table 1 provides further detail on characteristics of women seeking abortions. Although Whites continue to constitute a majority of abortion clientele, the proportion has declined from 72.5 percent in 1980 to 63.7 percent in 1996. The percent of women seeking abortions who are African-American increased steadily from 25.6 percent in 1980 to 32.1 percent in 1990 and has remained close to that level. A trend which has remained essentially the same is the proportion of abortion clientele who are unmarried. Over three-fourths of those women having abortions are not married.

Table 1 provides additional information about the influence of marital status on the likelihood of terminating a pregnancy as is indicated by the interaction of race and marital status. Pregnancies to married white females are the least likely to be aborted - a trend which has remained consistent. Although pregnancies to married African-American women are also less likely to be aborted than those of unmarried African-American women, the proportion of married black pregnancies terminated is four times that of comparable whites. The greatest change has occurred among pregnancies to unmarried white females. In 1980 they were 1.8 times more likely than pregnancies to unmarried African-Americans to be aborted. By 1996 the proportion of unmarried white pregnancies terminated dropped by more than half and were essentially the same as African-Americans' termination rate.

Table 2 provides information about additional characteristics of abortion clientele. Reflecting the trend toward an older clientele, more of the women seeking abortions in 1996 have had previous pregnancies and previous abortions. Also reflecting the growing maturity of abortion clientele is the increase in educational level with an increasing proportion having completed 13 or more years of formal education.

The last item on Table 2 concerning gestation at the time of the termination provides an interesting perspective. Although the vast majority of abortions have always taken place during the first trimester (before the thirteenth completed week) of gestation, in recent years there has been a decided trend toward very early terminations (during the first 8 weeks) with almost half (48.5 percent) of all 1996 abortions occurring during this time period compared to 37.5 percent in 1980. The trend toward early termination may reflect technological development in the form of reliable early detection of pregnancy.

In summary changing trends in abortions include:

- a long term decline in both the absolute number and rate of abortions.
- a decrease in the proportion of pregnancies terminated.
- women seeking abortions are older with more previous pregnancies.
- earlier terminations.

This report has highlighted the trend in abortions over the past two decades and indicated some potential future changes. The growing proportions of women seeking termination of a pregnancy who have had previous births and/or previous terminations reflect both the aging of this population and the high rate of unintended pregnancy in Missouri as well as this country. One of the challenges presented by the potential

greater availability of abortion would be to reach those women who are at highest risk of unintended pregnancy and assist them in comprehensive consistent family planning.

References:

1Since 1983 Missouri has not received abortion reports from Illinois. Estimates of Missouri resident abortions taking place in Illinois have been obtained since 1988 but individual level data are not available and therefore are not included in this report. Even with the Illinois estimates included the number and rate of abortions to Missouri residents continue to decline and are lower than the U.S. abortion rate by about 32 percent in 1994.

2CDC. "Abortion Surveillance: Preliminary Data - United States, 1994." MMWR 1997;45:1123-1127.

3Ellertson, Charlotte. "Mandatory Parental Involvement in Minor's Abortions: Effects of the Laws in Minnesota, Missouri and Indiana", Am J Public Helath, 1997;87:1367-1374.

4Bachrach, Christine, Stolley, Kathy S. and London, Kathryn. "Relinquishment of Premarital Births: Evidence from National Survey Data". Family Planning Perspectives, 24:27, 1992. Carney, Eliza Newlin. "Legitimate Questions", National Journal, 1995:27:679-685.

Figure 1
Resident Abortion Rate per 1,000 Females 15-44:
Missouri and United States 1980-1996

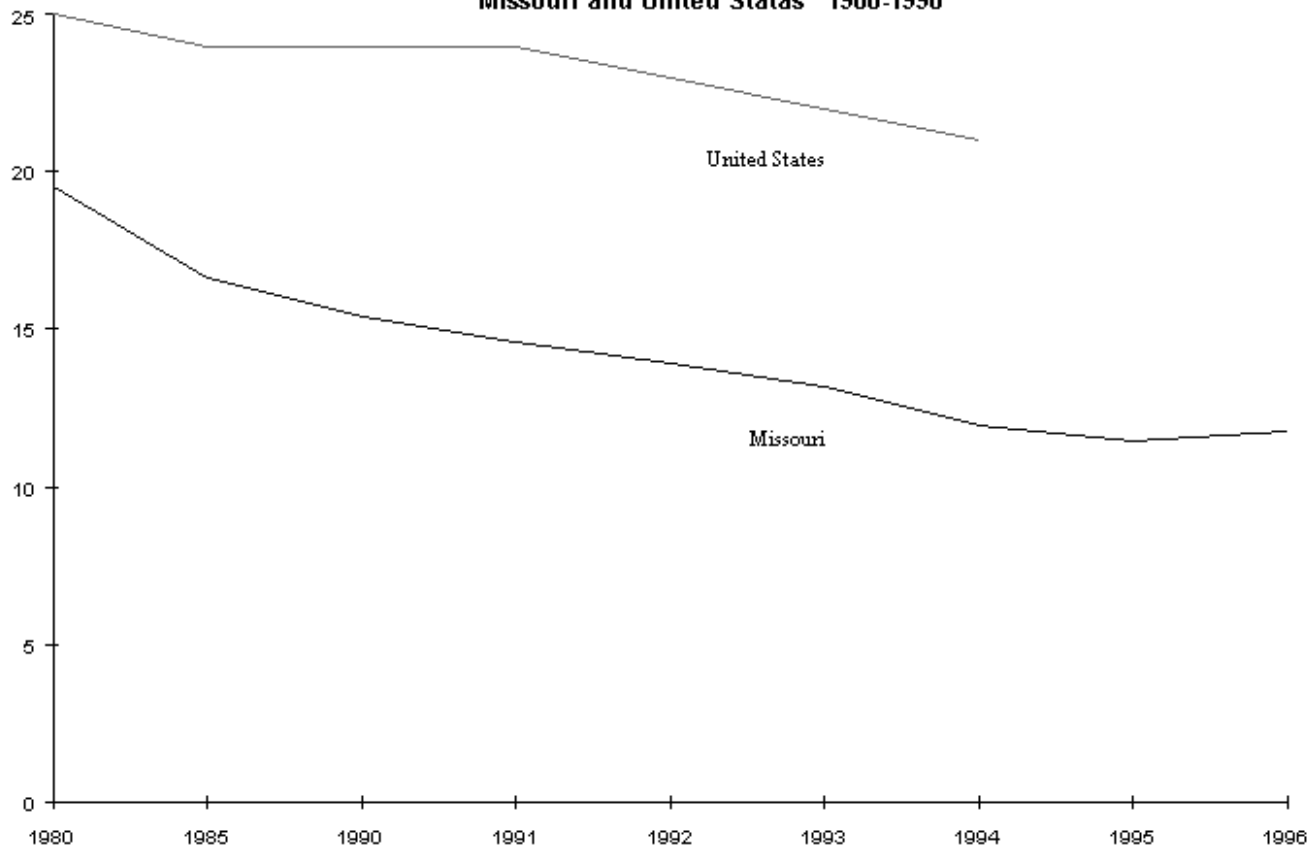


Figure 2
Missouri Resident Abortions
Percent Distribution by Age Groups 1980-1996

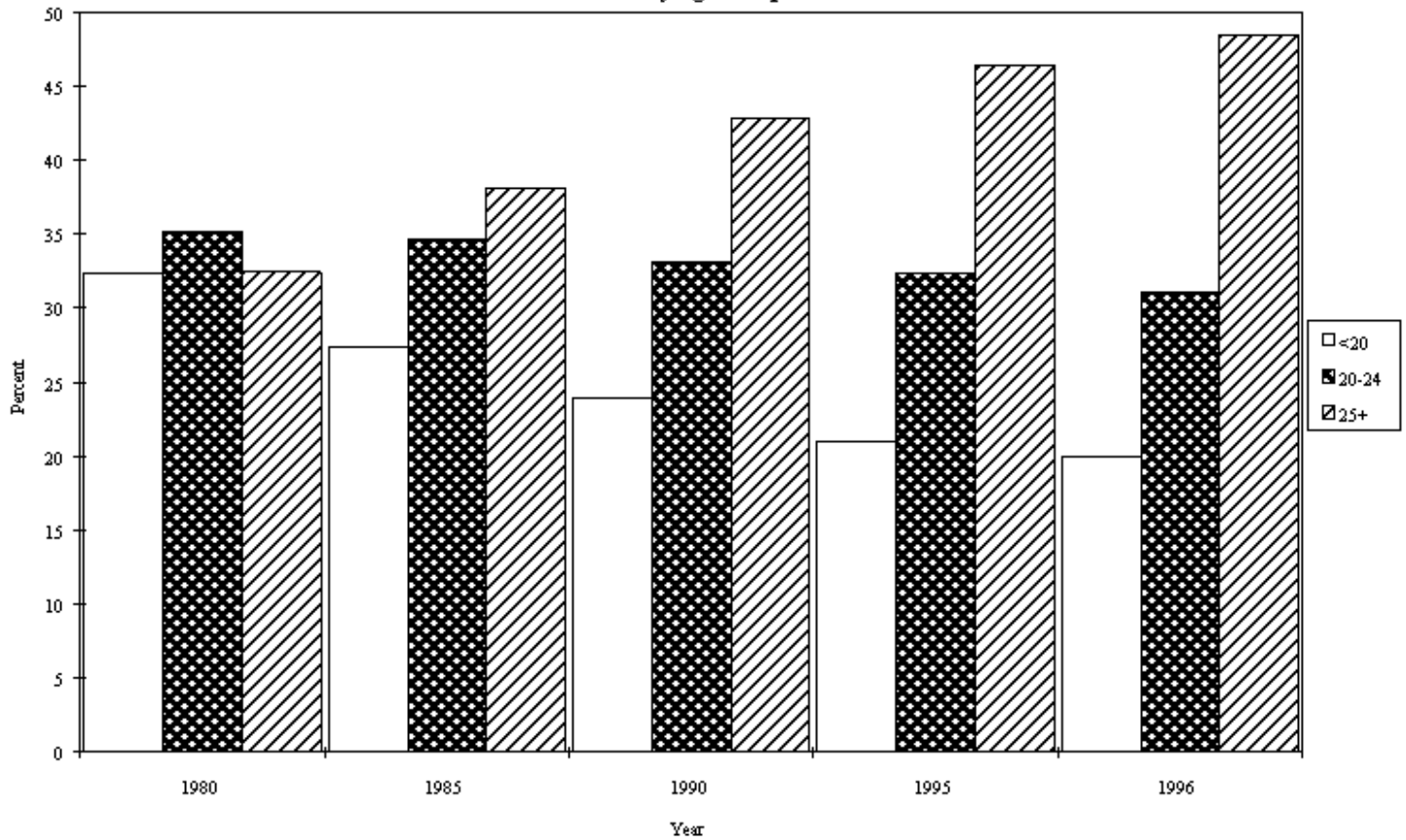


Table 1

Resident Abortions by Race and Marital Status of Mother: Missouri 1980-1996

	1980		1985		1990		1995		1996	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
White	15,717	72.5	13,738	71.5	11,765	65.6	8,866	65.0	8,916	63.7
African-American	5,556	25.6	5,105	26.6	5,767	32.1	4,235	31.1	4,447	31.7
All Other	277	1.3	303	1.6	340	1.9	430	3.2	534	3.8
Marital Status										
Married	4,870	22.5	4,122	21.5	3,817	21.3	2,714	19.9	2,880	20.6
Not Married	16,581	76.5	15,023	78.2	13,901	77.5	10,717	78.6	10,871	77.7
Total	21,671		19,210		17,947		13,635		13,989	
	1980		1985		1990		1995		1996	
Marital Status	No.	Percent Aborted	No.	Percent Aborted	No.	Percent Aborted	No.	Percent Aborted	No.	Percent Aborted
Married										
White	3,565	5.6	3,079	5.2	2,771	5.0	1,948	4.1	2,053	4.3
African-American	1,130	21.6	861	20.0	853	20.6	571	19.0	599	19.7
Not Married										
White	12,076	65.2	10,644	55.9	8,890	42.2	6,813	31.9	6,758	30.4
African-American	4,331	36.4	4,213	33.8	4,837	31.7	3,603	29.4	3,757	30.0

Table 2
Resident Abortions by Selected Characteristics: Missouri 1980-1996

	1980		1985		1990		1995		1996	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Prev Live Births										
None	11,842	56.4	10,500	54.9	8,479	47.2	6,015	44.1	5,907	42.2
One	4,400	20.6	4,150	21.7	4,615	25.7	3,636	26.7	3,763	26.9
Two	2,997	14.1	2,938	15.4	3,114	17.4	2,534	18.6	2,755	19.7
Three	1,139	5.4	997	5.2	1,187	6.6	958	7.0	1,044	7.5
Four or more	731	3.4	516	2.7	552	3.1	493	3.6	520	3.7
Prev Induced Abortions										
None	15,739	72.6	12,760	66.4	11,119	61.9	8,769	64.3	8,634	61.7
One	4,612	21.3	4,563	23.8	4,741	26.4	3,323	24.4	3,554	25.4
Two	1,012	4.7	1,328	6.9	1,474	8.2	1,011	7.4	1,226	8.8
Three or more	308	1.4	559	2.9	613	3.4	532	3.8	575	4.1
Education										
<12	4,452	20.5	3,752	19.5	3,612	20.1	2,572	18.9	2,551	18.2
12	7,418	34.2	7,884	41.0	8,189	45.6	5,757	42.2	5,838	41.7
13 or more	5,135	23.7	5,620	29.2	5,705	31.8	4,952	36.3	5,098	36.4
Unknown	4,666	21.5	1,954	10.2	441	2.4	334	2.6	502	3.6
Gestation (Weeks)										
<9	8,123	37.5	8,063	42.5	7,230	40.3	6,343	46.5	6,784	48.5
9-10	6,877	31.8	5,599	29.2	5,544	30.9	3,758	27.6	3,740	26.7
11-12	3,823	17.7	2,968	15.5	2,929	16.3	1,958	14.4	1,944	13.9
13-14	1,188	5.5	940	4.9	1,057	5.9	693	5.1	657	4.7
15-16	519	2.4	435	2.3	484	2.7	326	2.4	303	2.2
17-20	394	1.8	356	1.8	524	3.8	365	2.7	355	2.5
21 +	131	0.6	96	0.5	129	0.7	163	1.2	168	1.2
Total	21,671		19,210		17,947		13,635		13,989	

Provisional Vital Statistics for August 1997 Live births decreased in August as 5,750 Missouri infants were born compared with 5,920 in August 1996. The monthly birth rate decreased from 13.9 to 12.5 per 1,000 population. Cumulative births for the 8- and 12-month periods ending with August show slight increases in numbers, but slight decreases in rates. Deaths increased in August as 4,228 Missourians died compared with 3,746 one year earlier. Cumulative deaths for the 8- and 12-month periods ending with August also show slight increases. The Natural increase in Missouri in August was 1,522 (5,750 births minus 4,228 deaths) compared with 2,174 one year earlier. Marriages decreased for all three time periods shown below. Dissolutions of marriage increased in August, but decreased for the cumulative 8- and 12-month periods ending with August. Infant deaths increased for all three periods shown below. For the first eight months of 1997, the infant death rate increased from 7.3 to 8.0 per 1,000 live births.

PROVISIONAL RESIDENT VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE STATE OF MISSOURI

August					Jan.- August cumulative				12 months ending with August				
Item	Number		Rate*		Number		Rate*		Number		Rate*		
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
Live Births	5,920	5,750	13.9	12.5	48,844	49,143	13.8	13.7	72,794	72,842	14.1	13.6	13.5
Deaths	3,746	4,228	8.8	9.2	36,577	37,245	10.3	10.4	53,876	54,761	10.1	10.1	10.2
Natural increase	2,174	1,522	5.1	3.3	12,267	11,898	3.5	3.3	18,918	18,081	4.0	3.5	3.4
Marriages	4,719	3,293	11.1	7.2	29,592	28,131	8.4	7.8	44,884	43,012	8.5	8.4	8.0
Dissolutions	2,056	2,087	4.8	4.6	17,103	16,546	4.8	4.6	25,617	24,881	4.9	4.8	4.6

Infant deaths	38	43	6.4	7.5	361	395	7.3	8.0	536	600	7.8	7.4	8.2
Population base (in thousands)	...	...	5,359	5,395	...	...	5,359	5,395	...	...	5,304	5,346	5,383

*Rates for live births, deaths, natural increase, marriages and dissolutions are computed on the number per 1000 estimated population. The infant death rate is based on the number of infant deaths per 1000 live births. Rates are adjusted to account for varying lengths of monthly reporting periods.

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